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Review of *Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid*

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Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid. By Kimber Charles Pearce. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001; pp. x + 173. \$35.95.

In *Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid*, Kimber Charles Pearce has provided an interesting and detailed account that meets the reader at a number of important intersections implicating a bevy of compelling relationships, including but not limited to social science and public policy, rhetoric and history, rhetoric and economics, influential rhetoric on the presidency and a number of presidential administrations, and cold war decision-making and foreign policy. Moreover, Pearce employs a case study that documents an important program: John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress. As a result, much is accomplished, much of it original, and all in a rather economical 121 pages (excluding endnotes and references).

Chapter 1: "From the Academy to the White House: Rostow, Foreign Aid, and Social Scientific Advocacy," provides us with a brief biography of Rostow and a record of his government service. Rostow would distinguish himself as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford University, complete a Ph.D. in economic history at Yale, and serve during World War II at the State Department and at the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Rostow returned from the war intent on further establishing his academic and public policy career. He joined his friend and former CIA employee Max F. Millikan to co-found the Center for International Studies (CENIS) at MIT. The center's mission focused on developing a "world economic plan in U.S. foreign policy" (p. 13). While CENIS was assisted by some major foundations, it also received funding from the CIA. In Pearce's account, it is a somewhat minor disappointment that the relationship between the CIA and CENIS is largely unexplored. What becomes clear is that Rostow and his associates became convinced that the "gap" between the rich and the poor was a destabilizing force in world politics and that attention to this matter was critical. Rostow was intent upon convincing President Eisenhower of his views. Between 1956 and 1959, Rostow testified three times before Congress, outlining his views on the Soviets, economic development, and U.S. foreign policy issues. During the same period Rostow met with John F. Kennedy, who served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Rostow was particularly instrumental in advising Kennedy on economic aid to India, even drafting some of the senator's speeches. Such influence would carry over into later years. During the 1960 campaign, for example, Kennedy employed principles drawn from *The Stages of Economic Growth* to distinguish himself from his opponents on the question of foreign aid. Rostow worked closely with Kennedy during the campaign and throughout Kennedy's presidency

where he worked on instituting the Alliance for Progress, sat in on discussions on the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and served on the president's Policy Planning Council at the Department of State. Later, Rostow was appointed by Lyndon Johnson to the Inter-American Committee for the Alliance for Progress (CIAP) and later as National Security Adviser.

Given this brief introduction Pearce turns to Chapter 2: "Theory, Countertheory, and Rostow's Pursuit of Academic Novelty: The Process of Economic Growth." Herein, Pearce interrogates Rostovian intellectual foundations. The post-World War II environment was fertile ground for the renaissance of the study of economic development. It also provided a platform for Rostow's challenge to the neoclassicists. Rostow's analysis of the new economic situation was perfectly compatible with the newly reformulated cold war environment. Pearce explains how and why this was the case. Rostow's historical vision of macroeconomics was soon enveloping its creator in a "seamless web" of policy formation (p. 33). Pearce outlines key proof texts of the Rostovian argument such as those contained in *The Process of Economic Growth*. Professor Pearce judiciously and deftly brings out Rostow's anti-Marxism, his notions of human motivation, and his analytic dependence on the British industrial revolution as irrefutable evidence demonstrating the power of his macro analysis and "six societal propensities for capitalistic growth." These Rostovian prescriptions fit right in with ethnocentric Western Cold War ideology by predicting the inevitable triumph of liberal democracy and providing yet another vehicle to convey a virulent anticommunism. This was welcomed in its time by presidents and publics alike.

In Chapter 3: "Ideas in Action: A Proposal: Key to Effective Foreign Policy," Pearce turns to Rostow's attempts at influence during the Eisenhower era. Rostow's

concept of modernization and development aid looked beyond political alliances and military pacts such as the NATO alliance. For Rostow, events such as the Suez crisis in Egypt in 1956 underscored the need for change in Eisenhower's policies regarding global communism. Pearce describes the Princeton Inn Conference of 1954 to delineate how rhetorical invention occurs in foreign aid policy discussions. He then turns to a pivotal book developed out of that conference by Rostow and Millikan, published as *A Proposal: Key to Effective Foreign Policy*, which highlighted a new foreign policy thesis that focused on the "non-aligned" nations in Africa, Asia, Central America, and the Middle East. The key to a new, effective foreign policy, the authors argued, was economic rather than military. Development aid would assist the United States to fulfill its mission—"a mission to see the principles of national independence and human liberty extended on the world scene" (p. 64). Rostow felt that his theory, when applied to public policy, could achieve a "peaceful revolution" through a balanced "diffusion" of power. Rostow seems to have had a modicum of success with the Eisenhower administration. Pearce points to a "small" Development Loan Fund (DLF) created in 1958 as well as The International Development Associated (IDA) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), both of which were created in 1959.

Chapter 4: "Narrative Reason in Rostow's Stages of Economic Growth: A Non Communist Manifesto" discusses the evolution of and discursive strategies contained in Rostow's "magnum opus" *The Stages of Economic Growth*. The book combined history with macroeconomics to describe five stages of development that all nations eventually pass through. These stages include: "the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption" (p. 78). Pearce's helpful analysis refers to the stages

as a kind of "frame narrative" and he uncovers other "embedded narratives" in Rostow's arguments for modernization. These narratives implicate human motivation, describe cold war social organization, and employ the "Buddenbrooks analogy," a reference to Thomas Mann's novel *Buddenbrooks*, which traces three generations of a merchant class family. Using Mann's novel to secure comparative advantage in *The Stages of Economic Growth*, Rostow was able to employ the analog to explain transformations in national character and reinforce his notion of "diffusion of power." Rostow's *Stages* had garnered him both national and international renown. This book would also catapult him into service with both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

Chapter 5: "Advocating the Alliance for Progress: Rostow, Kennedy," and the Rhetoric of Peaceful Revolution and Chapter 6: "From Punta Del Este and Back: The Alliance Fades" are complementary and together constitute the book's primary rhetorical case study. By the time John F. Kennedy took office in 1961, the "Rostow Doctrine" had fully emerged. It was determined that Kennedy's Alliance for Progress would be a test site for application of Rostow's "modernization" principles to Latin America. "Economic diplomacy" was argued as the best road to capturing the minds and hearts of the masses of people in the area. Despite concomitant high-minded public discourse, "Latin America had become a primary cold war battleground" (p. 88) and the new Alliance was formed in part to counter Khrushchev's reported intention to conduct global wars of national liberation. Threats to the Western hemisphere were seen as best handled through "counterinsurgency" and "peaceful revolution" spurred by economic development. Rostow's influence in realizing these policies is well-documented. Rostow's hand can also be seen in Kennedy's rhetorical campaign on behalf of the Alliance for Progress. Pearce does a nice job of detailing

that campaign and relies principally on a rhetorical analysis of arguments advanced in four specific Kennedy addresses: the January 20 Inaugural Address, the January 30 Annual Message to Congress, the March 13 Address at a Reception for Members of Congress and the Latin Diplomatic Corp (where JFK introduced his plans for the Alliance) and a Special Message to Congress on Foreign Aid, March 22, 1961. Interestingly, Pearce maintains that the sum total of this rhetorical foray yielded "mixed messages" that to "a great degree" (p. 99) reflected "inconsistencies in Rostow's economic theory" (p. 100). In addition, after the Bay of Pigs fiasco the inconsistencies between "counterinsurgency" and "peaceful revolution" were laid bare and, as a result, Kennedy's Alliance was largely "discredited." The fallout also plagued the August 1961 Punta Del Este meeting with OAS members. But the founding charter of the Alliance and some unrealistic operational stipulations also proved vexing for Latin Americans.

After military coups in the Dominican Republic and Honduras, the handwriting was on the wall, the Alliance was fading. After Kennedy's assassination, it fell to the Johnson administration to revive it. Thomas Mann received a new appointment as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs and this was interpreted by some "as the definitive end of the Alliance program" (p. 109). By 1966, Rostow had assumed the position of national security adviser. In the LBJ years Rostow had shifted his position to promote private sector investment as the best route to modernization in Latin America. Nevertheless, the Alliance had become an important symbol and LBJ, partially in an attempt to divert attention from his growing dilemma in Vietnam, helped publicize the second Punta Del Este meeting in April of 1967. Six months later Rostow feebly reported that the results were "not dramatic" and blamed lackluster Congressional appropriations (p. 114). Pearce concludes that

while "Rostow's stages of growth model was a persuasive instrument of social scientific and political advocacy, its totalizing assessment of the economic evolution of developing countries could not be converted into an operational form generalizable from nation to nation" (p. 115).

Pearce has crafted an excellent book; it is well-researched and well-documented and demonstrates judicious use of archival materials. Pearce provides an interesting history and an insightful rhetorical analysis. In short, this is a fine example of rhetorical history.

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